

# INTEGRITY

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"NOW IT'S UP TO YOU!"

March, 1951

Vol. 5, No. 6

SUBJECT~ADAPTATION

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# EDITORIAL



WE WISH publicly to thank our subscribers for their great generosity and goodness in responding to our appeal for \$7000 to pay the printer's debt. As this goes to press (February 21st) we have already received \$5,728, with hundreds of letters, many gift subscriptions and promises of prayers.

The ten little Willocks and Dermody (now eleven by the birth of another little Dermody in the past week) awoke so much solicitude in their hearts that we are thinking of presenting each with a commemorative tin cup. Not a few people expressed their admiration and concern for Joe McQuade, our printer. We said in our letter that he was magnanimous, but we didn't tell what he is really like because no one would believe it. Let it go that he is magnanimous, but an exemplar of that virtue. So to speak, he's a shrewd business man, not getting himself out on this limb from not knowing any better or from being a flighty idealist, but strictly from virtue.

One thing this appeal has uncovered is the extraordinary amount of loving one's enemies being practiced by our readers. Quite a few contributions came from people who get angry with us every month, and one man was in the act of cancelling his subscription (mad about television, but most people said they liked the issue) when the appeal came, so he sent us five dollars instead.

We should like to thank all our benefactors personally, but we won't be able, though we hope to answer all the letters. We were all very moved by the response to the appeal.

We expect in future issues of INTEGRITY to approach the modern situation more concretely and to get down to specific issues. In this number we are treating adaptation, which is one of the keys to seeing a positive view ahead. Our readers will find, as we have, that this concept resolves a lot of dilemmas.

THE EDITORS



# Adaptation and Compromise

Catholics have only recently emerged from the ghettos to which they were assigned during the years following the Reformation. By ghettos I mean nothing bizarre or dramatic. I mean the dockside slums, the stockyard hinterlands, and the other-side-of-the-tracks in factory towns. My reference is to our fathers' experiences in employment offices and our mothers' unrealized wishes to have "a decent place to live."

I have no desire to reawaken the resentments that go with the ghetto. I point out the historical fact only so we may realize that a social conscience, or if you prefer, a concern for social justice, became likely and, perhaps, possible for Catholics only within the last few decades. While in the ghetto the conscience of the individual Catholic concerned itself almost exclusively with inner dispositions of spirit, affairs of the family and the mechanics of the parish. He was denied equitable influence in the community (often in the "old country" as well as here), and this made it unlikely that he would feel a personal responsibility toward a society which denied him status. The resultant frustration flavored his political judgments with animosity. Magnanimity toward the entire community has no breeding ground in ghettos. Yet without magnanimity social justice is impossible.

Things have changed drastically of recent years. The boundaries of the ghettos have dissolved. The change has been so rapid that most of the educational and psychological readjustments have not yet been made. That is why we can currently observe the very strange fact that Catholics in some of our cities display obnoxious minority inhibitions although they are, in reality, a majority of the population. A ghetto-complex in City Hall is a strange sight indeed, but who has not seen it?

## Two Directions

As we Catholics emerged from social obscurity two avenues of opportunity were open to us. Only one of these avenues was obvious and inviting. This was the opportunity at last "to get what was coming to us." We had been denied the property and the dignity to which all men are entitled. Now we had the chance to get them. Our heritage of peasant culture, diligence, patience, and self-sacrifice for our children—proved to be a highly productive instrument when we were given the green light. Our familiarity with building construction, from hod carrying to plastering, coincided with one of the most extensive building programs in the history of the world. Foremanship and ownership were

bound to follow. Our numerical strength, popular franchise, and backlog of accumulated resentments made it almost inevitable that pressure politics would be our meat. All in all, there was no obvious reason why we should have paused and considered on the threshold of the ghetto. The direction we were to take seemed quite clear.

In retrospect we can see but one sign-post which indicated the presence of another avenue. The Church had spoken! Leo XIII, exhibiting the Church's ever opportune concern for the mission entrusted to her by Christ, anticipated the relaxation of post-Reformation restrictions. In *Rerum Novarum*, a letter on the condition of the social order, he provided the newly emancipated Catholic with the principles of a New Order. Centuries had waited for a renaissance of Christian social justice! The aims and slogans were provided: "The uplift of the proletariat," "The restoration of all things in Christ," "The establishment of vocational groups," "The re-distribution of property," "The reform of the social order."

A very special character was imposed upon the work to be done. This character was the key to both the ends and the means. It prescribed the spirit in which the work was to be started and the spirit with which all the diverse aspects of the program would be harmoniously integrated. The character was *apostolicity*. All temporal pursuits were to receive their vitality and direction from a transcendental source. The call concerned itself with everything both heroic and commonplace. No dream of social conquest for Christ could be too grand. No social function however humble or mundane could escape the embrace of the Holy Spirit.

This message went for a long time unheeded. The Catholic ship to a better terrestrial life took off without its sailing papers. Saints Paul, Joseph, Francis, and Dominic were not on board. Catholics turned to secular prophets to lead them to a promised land where living standards would be forever on the increase. Few people in this country even heard of *Rerum Novarum* until the publication of *Quadragesimo Anno* (Forty Years After). Most of those who paid it heed (and it is in this way that God brings good out of evil!) were those who had been left behind on the dock or who had fallen overboard when the ship of Prosperity weighed anchor. These were the people who for some reason or other could not be eligible for Success. These were the halt, the lame, and the blind. These were the hopelessly poor, the untalented, the neurotic, the uneducated, the spiritually rich, the



truly educated, the heroes and the saints, all of them unfit to respond to the clarion of Material Optimism.

It is these same people who have come to be known as extremists, radicals, dreamers, and crackpots to the rest of the Catholic body. They are currently to be found everywhere, their number growing, among the clergy as well as the laity, in the corners of universities and in corner service-stations. They are a motley crew indeed to whom almost any title is appropriate. They are diverse, ranging from saints to sinners. Among them are alcoholics and contemplatives, neurotics and sages. Vice and virtue intermingle in a startling fashion. The only unity that exists among them is a conviction, the needle of which fluctuates between two sides of a meter; one side of the meter is a contempt for the crass materialism of our times, the other side is a whole-hearted conviction that Christian apostolicity is the key to a New Order.

### **Adaptation and Compromise**

It would be vain and presumptuous to suppose that "radical" Catholics are any better than (for lack of a better word) "conservative" Catholics. It would be sinful to set them one against the other. Yet there is an attitude peculiar to each group which exists as a fact, and which I believe we should examine in all charity. Both groups agree that the forms proper to Christian living in another day (no longer ago than yesterday) are outmoded. The structures of the personal lives of Catholics, of the parish and the family, although retaining certain immutable properties, must modify their mode of operation so as to make them more efficacious in today's world.

These changes presume an impact of Catholicism upon the secular world. The social area must receive the same conscientious scrutiny formerly reserved for individual morality, family customs, and parochial affairs. This is a new burden upon consciences unskilled in social prudence, and what is meant to be adaptation can easily become compromise.

Now it is my contention here that good sincere Catholics honestly desirous of reconciling their eternal destiny with their temporal needs will adapt or compromise depending upon whether they think in terms of an influence which is attuned to the maintenance of an increasing standard of living or attuned to an orientation which is apostolic. In other words, reverting back to the two avenues described above, only compromise is possible for those who persist in traveling the avenue of "getting what is coming to us," whereas adaptation can carry in its wake a growing

Christian influence and a material and spiritual improvement for all those now deprived if it proceeds from apostolicity. I should like to illustrate this point by referring to three different areas of action in which both radical and conservative Catholics are engaged—raising families, reforming economic structures, and propagating Catholic literature.

### **Rhythm the Compromise**

Let's take the case of a Catholic couple who have just had their third baby. They would rather not have another one, at least not right away. Why? The parents are anxious to better themselves, both spiritually and materially. Presuming that they had been raised in families where privation was common, they would like to spare their children the consequences of want, fear and ignorance. They are not greedy, because the things they desire are for the good of their children and, as far as they can see, necessary in a world where one must forge ever upward socially and financially or else be left behind.

They also feel that to train children properly for the complex world of today the parents must give more time to study and to leisure-time training, which is very difficult in a family where every ounce of parental energy goes into meeting bills, making repairs, cooking, scrubbing, ironing and sewing.

Being good Catholics they will not use contraceptives. But Rhythm—there is a method which is not sinful! Reluctantly and timorously they adopt the method.

The besetting fear is one of pregnancy. Now, Rhythm is a slim and uncertain guarantee against conception. It does not for a moment (to those who know) remove the fear of pregnancy. Fear is a thing which grows the more one is concerned with it. This attitude of fear and hyper-cautiousness drives the parents to be even more concerned about security and social prestige. To guarantee this security they increase their insurance, become more and more anxious about the health and progress of the three children they have, all of which puts a greater strain on the budget. Paper and pencils are much in evidence as fear increases, and the cold calculations of arithmetic are the basis for family security. Naturally the fear of pregnancy now approaches the stage of panic. It is about this time, according to Father Hugh Calkins,\* that such a family is likely to turn to birth control. Fear of pregnancy has increased, and trust in God has actually decreased. Greater security is sought in contraception.

I do not write this gloating over the fate of such families,

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\* "Rhythm—The Unhappy Compromise" Integrity reprint, 10¢.



nor do I take sadistic pleasure in condemning the one method on which they pin their hopes. My sympathy for them as well as for the truth compels me to point out that this compromise can bring neither the temporal nor eternal happiness they want.

It would be otherwise were they to accept the apostolic orientation. They would still see the need for a new approach to Christian family life. They would still be very much aware of today's conspiracy against large families. But they would not regard these problems as occasions for compromise but rather as challenges to Christian ingenuity.

The use of Rhythm is one of the main reasons why it is difficult to raise a normal-sized family, because if parents turned to God for trust and to the Church for direction they would have the children from apostolic motives and also, *from the same motives*, organize with others to reform a society which despises parenthood. The reason why there are so few Catholics trying intelligently to work out social patterns based upon equity is because so many think that *they* can get along by using Rhythm.

The radical Catholic is aware that God's providence is in no way compelled to operate within the calculated niggardly framework of a selfish enemy. It is God's will that is immutable, not the economic system. They do not, as the compromisers do (often unwittingly), look upon prayer as a means of achieving success within an atheistic system, but rather they place their material security in God, while *they* at the same time work to further His will in their lives, families and community.

There is a definite compatibility between temporal prosperity (of a frugally comfortable kind) and eternal beatitude. Both come from the same merciful Father. But can we expect either if we neglect to use the apostolic means He prescribes? Hardly.

### **Economic Reform**

Those who try to adapt Christianity to a pattern of "getting what is coming to us" are usually blind to the greatest evil in our economic system. They constantly, and with some justification, seek in their work and prayers for material success. They realize from experience that the huge corporations and their busy machines produce in abundance the very things they desire. They mark their progress from the ghetto in milestones of new gadgets. Even when they read the encyclicals the things most impressed upon their minds is the need for alleviating material deprivation. The spiritual deprivation, more vehemently deplored, rings no such affirmative note. Because they are matter-conscious, they have only admiration of the "glorified and transformed" machine,



but they close their eyes to the degradation of the men who make the machine, a degradation that is more spiritual than material. Thus their idea of social reform considers only a more equitable distribution of the fruits of the machine, but never inquires into the spiritual poverty which the same machines produce on even larger scale.

The radical Catholic relates two current facts in order of cause and effect. The first fact is the current irresponsibility of adults as parents, as citizens, as Catholics. The prevailing sins, such as divorce, birth control, lack of interest in religion, compromise of honesty, juvenile delinquency, do not so much proceed from malice as from an attitude of "Who cares?" The other fact is that our system of production is turning wage-earners into robots. The second fact is the cause (or at least *a* cause) of the first. Robots *are* irresponsible. A robot society could not be a Christian society because Christians must (as a bare minimum) be responsible people.

It would seem at first that to question the whole system of robot labor would be to cut our own throats, because we all know how dependent we are upon that system. Again, in line with the ghetto attitude of "getting what is coming to us," we can presume that at some time in the future we can bring *pressure* to bear to force a reform of the system. These arguments are not valid reasons for preparing our children for either robohood or being the masters of robots.

It might be well to remember that the Father of the Faithful, Abraham, was tested by God's telling him to kill his son. Remember also that the test went only as far as Abraham's assent; an angel was sent to stay his hand. The objective facts of today's situation compel us to admit that the same system which keeps us alive materially is killing us spiritually. Let us give assent to this proposition and then turn to the angel to deliver us.

There is deliverance. Personal responsibility, if raised as a challenge against robohood could turn young minds and talents in the direction of group co-operation. Apostolicity could be made incarnate in small shops, stores and restaurants, in co-operative house building, hospices for the old, the outcasts, the neurotics. Publishing houses could be started. Men could learn to control the machine, *actually and personally* turning it to apostolic ends. Robots would die with our generation and a new generation of men freely returning their gifts to Christ would live and bring about a new order of justice. This is adaptation. The other is compromise. And the urgent point is: compromise may succeed

for today and even for tomorrow, but our children and our children's children will only be saved when the steps that now seem drastic are taken.

### **Popular Catholic Literature**

I can still remember how amazed and delighted I was when I discovered a small Catholic book section in a public library. It was not its presence there but its contents which excited me. This particular library in the late afternoon is darkened by the shadow of the huge Mission Church which thrusts its twin spires into the sky only a few hundred yards away.

Despite its monumental proportions this church had never made me so aware of the grandeur and scope of the faith as did those few hundred dusty, seldom-read books. Through their pages I caught a glimpse of a Catholic cosmos that extended into infinity and yet, wonderfully enough, a cosmos that could embrace my own little life and affairs. I avidly read Belloc as he traced the movement of the finger of God through human history. Chesterton spoke in parables of the transcendent God and His immanence and the paradoxical impact of divinity upon the trifles of human affairs. The sun reflected from a tin can, causing it to glow like a jewel in its dump-heap, became for me a symbol of theological significance.

As I read through Benson, Knox, Lunn, Noyes, Bloy, Bernanos, Maritain, Gill, Leen, Adam, Laros (and on and on) the boundaries of my intellectual ghetto gradually expanded and I became aware of an endless number of facets of the faith, only a few of which could be found within the tight enclosure of Irish Catholic parochialism. These facets were not merely multiple but revealed a common integrating principle, and though the uttermost limits of this cosmos faded into mystery, I knew that it was One, that it was Holy, that it was Catholic, and that it was Apostolic.

I owe a great debt to publishers and to writers, and I know what power there is in the printed word. In this area too, the pattern of compromise and adaptation reveals itself, and again the relationship to the two avenues of egress from the ghetto stamp their peculiar marks upon the printed page. My experience with apostolic literature is an experience typical of only a few because of the reluctance of so many Catholic writers, editors and lecturers to abandon the avenue of "getting what is coming to us." These journalists are forever engaged in counter-Reformation tactics. They set out to show that Catholics are very interested in science; that Catholics are really awfully kind and nice; that Catholics are



broadminded and tolerant; that the Church (ruefully) has made some mistakes (as though Peter's denial recorded for all to see were not evidence enough!); that Catholics realize that there are lots of good things outside the fold, etc., etc., etc. This policy can be pursued with enthusiasm because it goes along with the natural ambition of Catholics to be socially acceptable. It proves that we are just like everybody else (perhaps even more so!). It proves that *our* schools are just as good as *their* schools. It proves that *we* can produce big shots just as well as *they*. This kind of journalism, when it is chronic and unrelieved by any emphasis upon those Christian traits which are anathema to the world, justifies mediocrity and makes any Catholic who takes apostolicity seriously appear to be a religious maniac.

This is the point at which compromise sets in. The unique responsibility of the Catholic writer, educator and editor comes as a consequence of his being set apart from the trees so as to see the forest. Due to particular gifts of learning, perspicacity, and intuition, he is the explorer and watchman of truth. His readers are more or less immersed in the flux of contingent circumstances, and, though their judgment may be better than his concerning local and specific matters, his judgment *should* be better than theirs concerning the whole picture and the ships that cross its horizons.

Evidence of the Church's urgent desire for apostolicity may have escaped the wage-earner due to no fault of his own, but the man of letters could not possibly have escaped it; the lookout in the crow's nest cannot expect the crew to prepare for a storm until *he* tells them that the horizon is dark. Consequently it amounts to a betrayal when a Catholic publication fails to evidence some of the same urgency that appears in the encyclicals on social reform, and some of the same militance found in the Epistles and Gospels. Yet in some publications one can see articles and ads that smile upon enlightened concupiscence side by side with clipped quotes or militant columns that try valiantly to strike a note of apostolicity. Apostolicity sounds platitudinous or fanatical amid such "business as usual" surroundings. The militant writer should not have to vie with trivia in order to be heard. He should be given the express track and high-balled all the way. A quotation from Chesterton or from Pius XI does them no courtesy. Editors should not merely quote but *implement* the doctrine by applying it to the specific matters of everyday life.

With such editors, religion continues to be merely a "slant" or an "angle" given to activities which spring from purely secular sources. Religion as an integrating principle is seldom revealed.

Rather than bring to their readers that kind of intellectual food and practical information that will help them to transcend the roaring tide of contingencies, these editors permit the same tide to engulf their policies, and so display to the reader the same state of confusion from which he hopes to be guided.

Adaptation, so sorely needed, would bring reforms different from those that strive mainly to outdo the slicks in technical excellence. Adapted to our times, the Catholic publication would strike a revolutionary note. Its vitality would not depend upon any technical device but upon its Christian dynamics. Within a wide range of tones, the revolutionary spirit of apostolicity would find the proper note for each particular class of reader.

At the time of this writing, *The Sun Herald* is in dire financial straits. Here is a publication to which we can point as an example of Christian adaptation to daily journalism. A group of Catholic journalists in Kansas City are making a heroic attempt to produce a daily paper which is Christ-oriented. They have, of necessity, set themselves apart from the "getting what is coming to us" school. Being themselves a product of but a few years of modern Catholic apostolicity they could not pattern themselves after the *New York Times*, a product of four centuries of secularism. Nor could they imitate the *Christian Science Monitor* whose policy and creed, unlike their own, meshes quite nicely with the current trends of secularism. They admittedly are groping for the form proper to Christian daily journalism in America, simply because that form *does not as yet exist!* Yet in spite of the monumental task their few months of publishing has produced a paper of considerable merit and great promise.

In *The Sun Herald's* fight for survival more is being weighed than merely the competence of its staff or the worth of one publication among many. What is being measured is the extent to which Catholics have emerged from the ghetto. Have they come so far as to be able to appreciate and support a daily (at least one) which acts as though Catholicism were really a world force in its own right, that is, as a molder of spirits rather than the peculiar creed of a self-conscious minority? We shall see.

After many failures Christianity will emerge the victor. The seeds of adaptation have taken root and nothing will deny them their blossom and fruit. More and more Catholics are switching to the second avenue from the ghetto, and those who continue along the first avenue no longer do so out of ignorance. This makes all the difference in the world.

ED WILLOCK



## Mothers-in-Law

*"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh."*

So precisely put, it would seem of all relationships this one would know the least dissension. Yet because we are hearers of the word but not doers, there is strife and quarreling and unhappiness—and mother-in-law trouble. And as is his wont, when man is unable to cope with serious things he makes jokes about them. Poor joke, this. About as funny as the jokes on poverty and fecundity, youth and sex, riches and parsimony; travesties on the commands that we procreate, be pure, and love our neighbors as ourselves. Jokes about mother-in-law trouble are in the same category, dismissing as a comic maladjustment something that is tragic and which, if we are to restore ourselves as well as all things to Christ, is as needful of solution as all the social ills.

When we return to examine the command which has the most bearing upon it, we see it is not directed to the parents but to the newly-wedded pair, in order to impress upon them that once we marry we become masters of our new life in a special way. From the moment the vows are pronounced we are a unit, alone and committed to a course that has its start at the altar and its end in death. Perhaps some of the strife would have been avoided had it been directed to the parents; but something so positive as a newly-made marriage calls for positive counsels—the relationships contingent to it are implied and are inevitable developments of these commands.

In its negative aspect, the new marriage might be viewed as one less under each parental roof, one less at each family board, so many less shirts or slips in each family wash. But it is infinitely more than that. It marks the completion of a vocation, and it marks the beginning of another. A sacred vocation, vested with such dignity that in the Gospels it is compared with the vocation of Christ as Head of His Church. Just as the mystical life of the Father and the Son are inseparably bound, yet separate, so is the life of the parent parting with the child through marriage. The same life is shared in essence, they are the same flesh, the love between them is everlastingly the same; yet as Christ's advent marked a coming forth from the Father, so the child comes forth from the house of his father and establishing himself in a new life is complete and dedicated in it. Again and again we see reflected the figure of the Mystical Body. First in the body itself:

the body—head and members. Then in the family: "Wives be subject to your husbands as to the Lord; because a husband is head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the Church." Then in society: "Be subject to the higher authorities, for there exists no authority except from God." All nature, all human relationships, are designed to the same pattern—all echo the sacred dignity of Him Who is *the* Head—and in the affairs of men the type is established that we might achieve a likeness to it.

Where then does the trouble lie? Probably in a failure to appreciate what marriage is: a contract between three parties, man, woman and God—no one else. A poignant understanding of this should fill the bridal couple with such awe, with such jealousy for their newly-made maturity in God's eyes, that they would be loath to surrender any of their new prerogatives. And the parents, seeing the marriage in the stunning light of its sacramental reality, should fear so much as to reach out and lay a hand on it lest they mar the delicate balance which has been achieved at the altar and remains to be further consummated with physical and emotional and spiritual union.

At the wedding feast the new state of affairs is put sweetly, and usually sincerely, by the mother of the groom in terms of, "No, I don't feel I've lost a son, only gained a daughter." And yet it were better if she felt she *had* lost a son. For in truth she has. All but the ties of the flesh have been severed. She has the opportunity to surrender with grace, but if not, he is lost all the same. A renewal is stirring. Just as the vine dies in the winter after bearing its fruit, it is the fruit which starts again the following spring to bear and in another season to die. Somewhere along the way we have lost the sense of this immutable law—nature knows much more of surrender than we.

But what about a mother's "rights"? What are a mother's rights? "Honor thy father and thy mother." Marriage does not demand an end to the honoring. Honor and love are always due. With marriage, even more, even richer, for the entering into and sharing of the marriage state brings with it a new understanding of what the parents have done before. And the parents, in turn, receive the honor with a new graciousness, not in the same sense as when it came from the child, but coming from adults who are better able to see the warp and woof of the years' struggles, who see for the first time the pattern of their sacrifices, and whose love is less voluble, more fervent. These are the gifts of honor and love in their richest raiment. Again not defined but implicit, divinely designed to fill the needs of those whose fulfillment rests



now, having completed the first cycle of their vocation, on surrendering to the abatement of physical stamina, on looking ahead to the end of life, the beginning of eternity. Now is the time for watching the growth and flowering of what seeds have been sown. We sow the Word within the flesh of our own and the time comes when the work is done.

When this sense of the sanctity of the bridal role is lacking, it is usually not through any conscious fault but rather because we have humanized everything about us, marriage included. Not that it is unnatural, un-human—but in order even to be, it must first be *supernatural*. It so often becomes solely a cozy event, and a happy one, and to be told it is a noble and high vocation, that mutual sanctification of the partners and the sanctification of their offspring is the goal are nice words, even familiar words, but they no longer seem to etch the consciousness with a profound understanding of what has been started with the first step into marriage.

### **The Husband Holds the Key**

It is in proportion to his awareness of these things that the husband leaves the door closed, ajar or wide open to the overpossessiveness and interference by parents. No amount of citing texts seems able to override this blindness where it exists. A cloud of sentimentality settles down like a fog over his judgments and he is unable to draw clearly lines past which no one, even his beloved parents, may trespass. We say husband as though the shoe were never on the other foot, when of course it is many times. But since the role of head of the family casts upon his shoulders the larger burden of maintaining its confines sacred, his is the larger responsibility in this charge. The wife has many and equally solemn responsibilities, and the vision should be shared by both, but he is the spokesman and he it is who is usually at fault in the business of mother-in-law trouble. He it is who suffers such a ravishment of husbandly dignity when interferences are countenanced, for if he is not to fulfill this first charge with vigor, then all other things stand chance of failing in the wake of this first failure. And the number of marriages is legion where interference by mothers-in-law has driven a wedge in the intimate union of mind and body which must exist if there is to be a sense of the wholeness of the union, a togetherness in all things.

So far, so good. The husband has a definite stand which he must take, not just because he must be nice to his wife, but because God has made it his sacred obligation. The proper climate for fulfillment depends on erecting certain protective barriers around his marriage, and even the physical fulfillment in marriage

can be marred by interference. It can be insisted to the point of vocal paralysis that physical fulfillment is the essence, and to "live," physical compatibility alone is the must—and one can answer that for those to whom marriage is nothing more than physical union, delightful as it may be, living has not yet begun. Over and over we are told it is the mind of Christ which must be in us—it is the mind of Christ which is the life of the members of His Body. We can be united to Him in His Church but if we are not of His mind we are dead branches on a tree. And so in marriage, we can be united in physical union to the point of satiety and if there is no union of minds and spirits, there is far short of perfect fulfillment. In truth there is already the cancer sown whereby even the physical union can pall and eventually kill. That these parallels exist is not accidental. That the figure of Christ as the Bridegroom and the Church as His Bride are compared to the figures of the man and woman united in matrimony is not simply pretty poetry. There is even the awful evidence of schism to point a parallel to the awful interference of those outside the married couple. We know by what rule of faith we must live to safeguard faith, and we are shown by what rule of union we must live to safeguard the sanctity of the marriage.

Many times however, even when the husband makes clear his impeccable loyalty to this obligation, there is still strife—the result of personalities at war with one another regardless of what lines are drawn, what loyalties declared. And in this case, the burden of solution is the wife's. To be told by a son that you may not interfere is not guaranteed to make a mother-in-law automatically fall in love with her daughter-in-law. Quite the contrary, it is practically certain to widen the chasm between them. And the unhappiness resulting can be just as corrosive as the other type of interference.

The great paradox of Christianity is a setting up of boundaries and confines with truth, and a reaching over and beyond them with love. Christ hates sin, loves the sinner; His Church hates error, loves the erring. So in marriage; where there is incompatibility of temperament between herself and her mother-in-law, the wife hates the discord, but must love the discordant. And we say *must* advisedly, for we are bound by His love on the Cross to love the same way.

### **The Wife Understands**

So, having seen a conflict set up by the definition of her role as mistress of her own household, a wife is bound to set about the task of making her mother-in-law love her in spite of it. She



never will *because* of it. And this is hard. Hard for both (obviously the command to love applies to both) but possibly not as hard for the wife as for the mother-in-law. The younger woman is more facile usually; her outlook is colored by her youthfulness of mind and body, she is setting out upon a course which promises to be exciting and full of adventure. The older woman has met and solved her problems as a wife and mother, she has formed opinions and habits, she has put years between herself and the bride she once was, and her ability to return to know the mind of her youth is limited. She sees her experience and her knowledge as short-cuts by which she may save the young wife needless waste of time and effort; she fails to see, or is incapable of seeing, that part of the growth and maturity of the younger woman depends upon being left alone to make her way by trial and error. This is not to say that the parents can never profit the young couple by their own experience; but more often than not, the young people can best learn by making their own mistakes.

All this a young woman may come to understand, and it is armed with her understanding of this, with complete honesty, and with the love that is Christ's, that a young wife tackles the task of learning to love a difficult mother-in-law and waiting to see her love returned. There are few rules, there is no magic. It is a long, slow, often painful process. If young wives were saints, it would be easier—but they have themselves to conquer in order to win their mothers-in-law. They must learn a beautiful patience, they must evaluate actions and motives with simple honesty. They must understand, first of all, that surrender for the older woman is very difficult—not because of intractable character necessarily, but because she is harnessed by years of habit. Saving face is one of the most fundamental of human conceits and the young wife starts her married life with no face to save, if we may put it that way, but her mother-in-law has erected a whole hierarchy of values which, even though some are outdated, are for her the rule, and surrendering them to innovation demands much humility and graciousness. This cannot be done overnight. Where the conflict exists it is as concrete, as tangible, as oil and water unmixed. To resort to the technical jargon of our day, it is a homogenization of the two personalities which must be accomplished to achieve the solution.

### **Christ Loves**

It does no good for the young wife to consider what are, for her, her mother-in-law's faults and try to overcome her impatience with them. She must start far before that. She must start at the

point where she sees in her mother-in-law one whom Christ finds infinitely lovable, for whom He paid His precious price on the Cross, and who, in a mysterious way, is to Him as the only one. When we are faced with problems of incompatibility, so often we picture ourselves reflecting the injustices suffered by Christ; we offer them up with all the nobility we can muster and in a sweet, sticky puddle of self-pity extend the wound for more salt. It comes as a shock when we discover that our adversary offers up the conflict in the same terms. And usually that is the beginning of honesty—of a soundly humble evaluation of the unhappy state of affairs. For Christ would be with both, and should He chide, it would not be with a listing of faults and an exhortation to mend ways, but with "Love one another as I love you." It is impossible to strip the ego down to its proper puny size any other way, and it is equally impossible to find any other motive for trying to love someone who is really hard for you to love. This knowledge, that love is possible through Him, and that we will receive the grace to accomplish it from Him, does much to reduce tension and relax a soul faced with a long, slow, patient trek toward achievement. And it would seem the only rule to be applied universally for in-laws who have trouble loving one another is to keep the gaze fixed on Christ. This, and much prayer, will light the first tiny flame and it will grow as it feeds on grace.

The plea to love is a fine high-sounding ideal, and we can swallow it in terms of loving someone who is out of reach and whose enmity is on the grand scale, but when it takes the form of little irritations, daily annoyances, it is much much harder. Remember in *The Brothers Karamazov* the elder, Father Zossima, says of love: "Active love is labor and fortitude, and for some people too, perhaps, a complete science. But I predict that just when you see with horror that in spite of all your efforts you are getting further from your goal instead of nearer to it—at that very moment I predict that you will reach it and behold clearly the miraculous power of the Lord Who has been all the time loving and mysteriously guiding you." And so if we are going to be saints, we who are married, it is going to be not only by loving our vocation, but also loving those who, because of it, are right under our noses, whose rattling of pots and pans and slamming of doors sets our nerves on edge, whose ceaseless advice and correction become a cross almost too heavy to bear.

### Stay With It

We have said there is no magic formula, but there are snares of which we can beware. One of the few comforts which *seems*

justified for the young woman weighed down by mother-in-law trouble is running to her own people with her tale of woe. There she receives the comfort and understanding she needs, so she thinks, and yet very rarely is anything positive accomplished by it. And surely something negative is: a further erection of resistance and barriers. She returns, relieved of her burden, inspired to vindicate herself, armed with a refreshed stubbornness, resentment, and her head full of reviewed "rights" by which she will be vindicated. When what is needed is love and understanding and tenderness, these sorties to the old stamping grounds are to be avoided like the plague.

And in the same sense, exchange of notes about the persecutions of mothers-in-law with other women who suffer the same trials are rarely worthwhile. If one is aiming at love as the only solution, and it *is* the only solution, every little breach of loyalty to the intimate family circle is an eating away of the honest effort already made. And don't we all know, too well, how after having surmounted some problem of human relationships at last, we look back at our own smallness in having discussed the problem with outsiders, and burn with shame at the memory of it?

Then there is this last consideration: for the married, everyone who is part of their life is there by the knowledge and consent of God. One might even be so bold as to say for the married, it takes in-laws as well as husbands and children to mix a recipe for the way to perfection. Saint Monica found it so. It would be a comfort and a help if instead of running to mothers to pour out the miseries young wives would run to the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine. There they will find his account of how Monica, his mother, ran headlong into a mother-in-law bent upon persecution, and how with patience and love and prayer, by trying to serve instead of trying to fight, she won the older woman's fierce devotion—and of course in the end, that high, high sanctity for herself that is the destination for all of us.

MARY REED NEWLAND

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## NOTICE

Our supply of "Priests Among Men," Cardinal Suhard's pastoral on the priesthood, has been exhausted, and we have turned over the translation to Fides Publishers (South Bend 1, Indiana) who will make it available within a week or two at 75¢ a copy. We are turning over all orders on hand to them.



# Religious Life and the Modern Mentality

In many countries the post-war years have witnessed a crisis in religious life that manifested itself in two ways: a sharp decline in the number of vocations, so great, indeed, that some institutions had to close their novitiates for lack of subjects; a gradual loss of zeal in many who had in their youth enthusiastically embraced the religious life and then found that they could no longer glimpse the star that had once fascinated and conquered their hearts.

Diverse explanations have been offered of this crisis; some have suggested that the day of the religious is over and done with; others see a radical incompatibility between the traditional forms of religious life and the needs of our day and hence demand its complete "transformation." A more balanced view has been taken by some of the outstanding religious periodicals, such as *La Vie Spirituelle* and *Revue des Communautés Religieuses* in France and Belgium, and *La Civiltà Cattolica* and *Vita Cristiana* in Italy. Writers in these reviews attribute the crisis to a lack of adaptation; what is needed, they say, is an adaptation of the old forms to new needs, preserving at the same time the existence and the peculiar character of the religious orders approved by the Church. Such adaptation would solve the problem of vocations.

It seems clear that any adaptation, if it is to be vital and fruitful, must presuppose a perfect knowledge of the modern soul as well as a grasp of the history and spirit of the religious order; in this way a renewal can be brought about that will conform both to the requirements of the evangelical counsels and monastic observances, and to the attitude and dispositions of the postulants. It is not sufficient to reprint the constitutions, bringing them into conformity with the new code of canon law; there must be a profound knowledge of the evolution that has taken place in recent decades in the ideas and habits of the young men and women who are to be drawn to the religious life. It is necessary to study the mentality of the new generation and then perhaps we shall succeed in understanding the needs, the qualifications, the weaknesses of the young people who knock at the doors of our convents. We shall be better able to draw them to Christ in the way of the counsels and prepare for them a setting that is more suitable to their needs.

The following pages have been written in the hope of throwing some light on the mentality of modern youth in relation to

religious vocation. But how is one to know the mind of young people? If it is true that man is, to a great extent, the product of his environment, it will help to examine closely the environments in which young people move—the family, society, and the Church. After that, in order to get first-hand knowledge of their strength as well as their weakness, we shall inquire of the young people themselves, testing their reactions to the evangelical counsels and monastic observances. From this evidence we may succeed in drawing closer to the temper and mentality of the young men and women of our time, who, in their own way, are so eager to live in the shadows of the cloister.

### **The Family Environment**

Whoever wishes to know the young people of today must first of all enter the sanctuary of the home. The family is the primary cell of the social organism, the "indispensable cell of the people," as Our Holy Father Pope Pius XII called it. It is the back-bone of the state and the pulse of public life. How has the family fared in the post-war years? For an answer let us turn to those organs of public opinion, the press, the films, the radio, and so forth, which are faithful expressions of individual instincts and indices of familial morality.

Now if we are to believe these "well-informed" sources, we must confess that, despite notable exceptions, the family is no longer a school of virtue, of sacrifice, of total dedication, but rather a breeding-place of vice, in which the very passions that destroy the sanctity of the home, robbing it of the intimate and gracious union of its members and the joyous smile of peace, are catered to in every way. In such an unhealthy climate, children are unfortunate at birth, warped in their development, and arrive at maturity without a solid Christian formation.

This deplorable state of affairs is frequently aggravated, especially in industrial centers and cities, by the fact that some members of the family are forced, either by reason of their work or other social exigencies, to live away from home. And not only for a few hours a day, but for days and even weeks at a time. As a result, the children, if they are not also working, are left without proper supervision. How do they spend their time? Where do they go? The movies, radio and television, the neighborhood hang-out, newspapers, comic books and cheap magazines, these are practically the only forces that form their ideas about life and that provide them with principles for judging how to live.

If to all this we add the fact that nowadays parents are ill-prepared to undertake the grave obligation of forming their

children, allowing them the greatest freedom of enjoyment and demanding of them a minimum of effort, we can see why the family environment is so unfavorable to the flowering of religious vocations, which normally require a strong Christian upbringing in conformity with the spirit of the Gospel and the commandments of the Church. Certainly God's grace has no need of us, yet it generally demands the co-operation of secondary causes and in the case we are considering sows the seeds of religious vocation in fields that are prepared to nourish them.

In some few families the situation is even worse; for in them the parents, far from favoring religious vocation, are the first to fight against it and to stifle any urge toward religious life in their children. The history of many a vocation to the cloister is a splendid account of victories won against the ingenious and at times almost diabolical strategies of the family to prevent its fruition.

### **The Social Environment**

The contemporary mind is only partially revealed by the family environment; a more powerful formative agent is the social environment, which also has a great influence on the family.

What, then, is the spirit that stirs in the modern world? Is it, perhaps, more favorable to the growth of religious vocation than the family proved to be?

Let us frankly admit that the real spirit of contemporary neo-paganism is expressed in the couplet: Freedom and Pleasure. A false notion of democracy has aroused an unquenchable thirst for liberty, understood as independence and autonomy. The man of the twentieth century wants to "build his own world," a world free of all preoccupation with an absolute, a world that dispenses with all aspirations toward the transcendent and has no need of God, a world from which is banished everything that rebels against the tyranny of modern technology and is linked with the outworn categories of religion, law, responsibility, authority, morality and so forth. The man of today does not want to evade himself, he wants to find his destiny within himself. Only so can he feel free, for he can say to himself: "This is my house; I have built it, stone by stone, according to my own plans. I have shut the door and have no intention of leaving it. I am free. The plan is perfect, for the house is me and I need not move a stone of it."

It is in this way that the contemporary world deludes itself into thinking that it is perfectly free, when in fact it has enslaved



itself to a happiness that is purely economic and material, that can find satisfaction only in pleasures that are sensual.

From such a conception a new humanity must arise that is constructed, not in accordance with a higher "order," but according to a "plan," not inspired by the "good," but by the "useful," not measured by "reason," but by "technology," not of "heaven," but of the "earth." Such is the "new man" that many are trying to create today; such is also the "ideal man" that already lives, thinks, rages in the hearts of millions and inspires the most important of contemporary social movements.

In this "new order"—supposedly the incarnation of earthly happiness—the individual is at one and the same time a soldier and a worker. It is he, through collective work, who creates the "new humanity." Every man must live for work and live by his own work; only thus can a "new world" be created. By collective action man can fulfill the purpose of his life—social well-being. He who does not work, he who does not earn his bread with the sweat of his brow, is a parasite. He who isolates himself from society, he who refuses to fight for the "economic redemption" of the poor, is a bourgeois, completely useless to society.

Clearly such ideas can hardly fail to create a mentality that is hostile, or at least indifferent, to religious life, contemplation, and voluntary poverty. Besides, the democratic spirit finds it almost impossible to bear—because impossible to comprehend—the yoke of religious obedience. As a matter of fact, the principle of "government by the people," when wrongly interpreted, can create in subjects a feeling of opposition—we were about to say, rebellion—to every institution, ordinance, law, or power that has not been freely discussed and approved by the community.

By virtue of the same principle, every individual expects to be treated equally, demands "liberty of action," that is, liberty of initiative and self-expression. Every disposition of a superior that binds the will and limits personal inclination is interpreted as an "attack" on one's liberty or an obstacle to the full development of one's personality. Thence also—by virtue of the "right to gripe"—comes the tendency to examine everything, judge everything, criticize everything on purely subjective grounds. Such attitudes are hardly a fitting preparation for the renuncements that are inevitable in religious life, nor do they dispose one to carry the joyous yoke of Christ along the way of the counsels.

### **The Catholic Environment**

We should be doing a grave injustice to our times if we were to judge them only on the basis of their undeniable faults and

fail to take into account the positive element of good that is in them. For our society has many credits to its account in the intellectual and social fields as well as in the moral and economic. The Church, especially through its various organizations, is continually bringing the leaven of Christ's spirit into the world. It is a leaven that little by little elevates, ameliorates, and transforms both individuals and society. For example: it is undoubtedly due to the hidden fermentation of Christian principles that men today have a greater sense of solidarity than their forebears; that they are more sensitive to the misery of others; that they more willingly sacrifice themselves for the common good of society. This same ferment has aroused the aspirations of the masses for light, progress, justice, social redemption. Catholic Action, in answer to the call of the Holy Father ("The hour of Action is at hand!") has marshalled all the forces at its disposal, especially the young. Through every medium—the press, the school, the movies, the radio, the labor union—it has repeated the order of the day: Let all get to work! There is an insistent need for apostles, for missionaries, for men with the courage to go among their brothers, into the homes of the rich and the poor, into the factories and offices, into the taverns, even, to remind forgetful man that the secret of peace and happiness can be found only in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In this atmosphere of "action," is born the "ideal of incarnation." These apostles feel the need to be in communion with men, to be the men who are to be saved, to be, as the Redeemer was, like to men in all things, like to them in their poverty, their misery, their anguish, their work, their life. Inspired by this ideal, the young lay Catholic is impatient of ancient structures and of traditional methods; he wants to take part immediately in the spirituality, the responsibility, the activity of the Church. Hence he tends to blur the distinction between action and contemplation and to see in action the means of his sanctification, according to the formula: "Action is the soul of the interior life and of the apostolate."

In this view, the religious have a place somewhere on the fringes of the Church's life, somewhat like the side-chapels of an ancient basilica. To enter a religious order or congregation would be like leaving the central nave and the "Holy of Holies," to retire to the sides or in back of the altar; while the real apostolate would consist in teaching catechism, visiting the sick, serving the weak and the poor, making an impression on the masses; in a word, rushing headlong into action. Such a mentality, which

weighs everything—individuals and institutions—on the scales of “production” and tangible results, runs the risk of under-estimating the interior life, supernatural action, the need of union with God, and so deters the young from entering religious life and thrusts them into a life of action.

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Now that we have sketched in broad outline the mentality of modern youth as we were able to discern it in the various environments in which they live and move, let us turn our attention to these self-confident young people who might present themselves at the doors of our convents and see if they are still capable of appreciating the beauty of the religious life and, more important, able to climb the steep path of the counsels.

When one speaks of religious life to the youth of today—to those who are most avid of dedication and sacrifice—the first question they ask is: “But how can I be of use to others by burying myself behind those walls?” Unconsciously the young man or woman who utters these words reveals a secret preoccupation: the fear of cutting oneself off, of not being of real service to the Church and society. They have no desire to be “lovers of niches and hymn-singers”; they do not want to fly from the battle of life; they want to share in the anguish, the torment of their brothers; they want to die fighting.

True there are some who feel the enticement of the cloister with a sort of nostalgia for the absolute, the transcendent, for that which passes not. Thus, we find among the notes of a Catholic Actionist this revealing confidence: “I am thinking of the religious life which would certainly satisfy my thirst for the absolute: But I prefer that my life be a continual service of others” (*Marie Vesius*, Rome, 1948). Like her, many others wish to prove their love of God by their love of neighbor, making themselves useful to the Church. They want to sanctify themselves by taking an active part in the drama of our times. They have an instinctive repugnance for anything that seems “dead,” of little or no use for the salvation of souls. In the same way, they react against whatever smacks of the conventional, the stereotyped, in a word, against “routine.”

Another characteristic of our young people is their love for creature, for the “whole” man, for the creature. Whatever is beautiful, whatever is not in itself evil, whatever reflects the smile of God, is sought and sincerely loved. They respond with every fiber of their being to Saint Francis’ “Canticle of the Creatures,” and it is very difficult for them to see in creatures an obstacle to





"I GUESS WE'RE ALL



DEEP DOWN INSIDE!"

the love of God. They feel that as they grow in knowledge and appreciation of the creature they draw closer to God.

Now if, after these general observations, we examine more closely the reaction of modern youth to the demands of the evangelical counsels we can form an approximate idea of their dispositions for the religious life, which in turn will give us an objective basis for a solution to the problem of adaptation.

1) *The Cloister*. Let us start with the cloister, for "entering the cloister" has become synonymous with "entering the religious life." Not infrequently the cloister presents itself to the minds of young people, especially those of Catholic Action, as a prison, or, at least as an obstacle to apostolic activity; it is a door that is closed to the preoccupations and the battles of the Church. Interesting and symptomatic is the response of a young girl to the following question which was addressed to her after a visit to a monastery of Trappistines: "What influence did the monastery have on you?" "The monastery seemed like an oasis of peace wrapped in an atmosphere of prayer. Yet I had the feeling that there was a barrier between the religious and me. That community is shut off from the things that interest me as a militant. While I felt so close to those chosen souls—I need so badly to unite my prayer to theirs and recommend my tasks to them—they seemed to be so far removed from us." What caused this girl to get such a bad impression? The narrative continues: "I had a long talk with the Mother. All she talked about was short skirts, painted faces, bare legs. And then of scandals, of the sins committed in speech, of the need for silence. Not a word about Catholic Action, of the necessity for basing the apostolate on prayer, on the apostolate of penance. . . ."

It is clear that today's youth wants the cloister to be a run-way, not a dead-end street.

2) *Poverty*. At one time, the cloister might have been a "solution" for the economic problem, a means of security that demanded little; that is no longer true. In fact, our young people embrace religious life without the slightest regret for the advantages or conveniences that they left behind in the world. They want to be as poor as the "real poor" of Christ, who have to earn their bread, crust by crust, with never more than enough just to sustain them. I say, to "earn" their bread, for the social outlook at the present time is such, that young people are ashamed to "eat the bread of others" without having earned it. This is a purely "economic" notion of poverty, which gives its approval to religious poverty only insofar as it approaches as much as possible



to the poverty of the proletarian. It fails to realize that the "discontented poor," the proletarians differ in their spiritual misery from the rich only in the lack of a regular income. Experience teaches that the "economic" poverty of many monasteries—if it does not become evangelical, that is, if it is not accepted in the spirit of poverty—runs the risk of creating a host of small cupidities, yearnings for the conveniences of the rich. When such a spirit springs up in a monastery, the "friends of poverty" (as saint Vincent Ferrer calls hunger, thirst, privations, contempt, abnegation) are little loved. As a result young people experience great difficulty in accepting the primitive living conditions they find in some monasteries.

More than anything else, perhaps, today's postulants like to have books and magazines; they suffer from a lack of them, as well as from a lack of the more ordinary means of getting information on Catholic life and culture. Yet in some monasteries, the liturgical, spiritual and apostolic movements that have engaged the attention of these young people before they became religious are almost completely ignored. This is why it is so difficult to attract to our cloisters young men and women who are as avid for knowledge and information as they are for light and air.

3) *Chastity*. Modern youth also has its difficulties with the notion of perfect chastity, which springs not so much from the weakness of their nature or the perverse influences of their surroundings as from a faulty sexual education and the erroneous notion that perfect chastity is the cause of the abnormalities that one meets with at times within the cloister.

We should also remember that in certain Catholic spheres (including Catholic Action) the idea is gaining ground that marriage is a higher state than virginity because it is more useful to society and better adapted to the development of one's personality. The family is thought of as the perfect community; and to young people are given the idea that in renouncing matrimony they must also give up all hope of bringing about the full realization of social life, the need for which they feel so keenly. As a result, many young religious, even the best, when they fail to find a director to enlighten and direct them, get it into their heads that their destiny is to walk through life "alone"; they soon make shipwreck of their lives, or if they do reach shore, they withdraw into themselves, resigned to being "tragic figures," unworthy to serve society.

4) *Monastic Austerities*. The vow of chastity (without excluding the other two) requires that special attention be given to

both internal and external mortification. But for the most part young people today—true products of their age—have difficulty in grasping the utility of monastic austerities. Accustomed at home to satisfy their every desire, to pamper their bodies, to enjoy all the conveniences of modern life, they are instinctively averse to anything that goes against, represses or mortifies their nature; and especially to certain penitential practices that they think are “stupid.” Our world is horrified at the sight of sacrifice. Is that what we were born for—to sacrifice ourselves? What is the purpose of our existence? Happiness; we are in the world to be as happy as possible. To the mystique of sacrifice the modern world opposes the mystique of pleasure.

This deep repugnance to mortification is due in great part to the humanistic, or better, the naturalistic education that is provided in our schools and colleges. If in the past an excessive contempt for the body made education inhuman, today a materialistic outlook tends to forget the spirit or at least to give the body a lion's share of its attention. It is not surprising then that twentieth-century youth, born and raised in an environment steeped in naturalism and sensualism, in an atmosphere of pleasure and play, finds it difficult to adapt itself to austerities that were devised in earlier times (when the rights of nature were blithely ignored) and under circumstances that were so different from ours. The traditional monastic observances, such as the cloister, silence, fasts, and so forth, if they are accepted at all, are looked at almost exclusively from a social and apostolic point of view; that is, as means of conquest, in terms of a special mission, and not as the normal concomitants of the state of perfection in which their religious profession has placed them.

5) *Obedience.* Certainly the most difficult thing for the young people of today to accept is the vigorous conception of religious obedience such as is presented to us, for example, by Saint Ignatius. Cradled from birth in rosy dreams of freedom and independence they find it hard to accept commands in the name of a higher authority or an absolute norm while being denied the right to weigh the motives for the commands.

No matter how willing they may be to submit to a superior, no matter how firm their desire to make any sacrifice, they experience the uncontrollable and almost unconscious urge to be unfettered, to breathe free air, to be fools, even, but in the way that they have chosen and designed.

This tendency of young people to treat superiors as equals, to grow stubborn when faced with rules that have been decreed by

The will of another, stems no doubt from the environment we have previously described, but it has its roots in the subjectivism that has permeated all strata of society. Having imbibed, in the school of idealism and existentialism, the cult of the absolute, the new generation accepts the risk of discovering and conquering the world, of constructing moment by moment, with no thought of the price, their own road through it. As a result, values that are psychological, temporal, irrational take precedence over those that are moral, spiritual and eternal. The useful, the pleasurable, the instinctive, the personal become the chief criteria for all human and social values. In the light of these criteria, the way of blind obedience following the ancient paths of religious perfection is simply absurd.

As an eminent psychologist recently noted,\* the modern world—with its methods and its progress—has impressed upon the contemporary soul the spirit of a little child who has just escaped from his nurse and is suddenly conscious of his freedom. A new world is open to him, unlimited as a shoreless ocean, infinitely more attractive—though infinitely more terrifying in its unexplored mystery—than the home and little garden of his parents. Here is a chance to be his own master and master of the world about him. Such is the alluring ideal of modern youth.

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It is not our intention to enter into the practical details of the adaptation of religious life to the mentality of modern youth. We have been satisfied to emphasize just one principle—modern youth will never succeed in thinking and living as their predecessors did. From this principle we may deduce a few conclusions, especially in regard to the vows.

Taking into account this new mentality and its needs, without mitigating the observances or departing from the original spirit of the institution, adaptation might well distinguish clearly between the "spirit of poverty," true evangelical poverty and "economic" poverty; between love of the virtue of chastity and the morbid forms that its practice sometimes turns up because of faulty education; between religious obedience and "automatism" or "egocentrism." Likewise, in the matter of austerities, adaptation must take into account the law of "compensation," inculcating a spirit of penance without draining the energies needed to fulfill one's other duties. The same norm can be used

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\* Rev. Victor de la Vierge, O.C.D., in *Religious Sisters* (reviewed in this issue of INTEGRITY).



in regard to modern "conveniences," hygienic or otherwise. If they serve as instruments to further the aims of religious life they should be adapted without hesitation; if their only purpose is to pamper the body or satisfy the passions, they should be rejected.

Certainly personal caprice or a desire for novelty cannot be the guiding spirit in the delicate task of adaptation; only the desire to live more faithfully according to the primitive ideals in the midst of new conditions can bring it about successfully. In practice, only the constituted authorities, moved by prudent zeal and a deep love of real perfection, can bring about a renewal of an institution without changing its spirit.

If those on whom this responsibility for the future of religious life rest know how, in the words of Pope Pius XII, "to make their institutes seem new," then every order and every congregation will become a seedbed of apostles, a nursery of doctors, a flowering field of sanctity. Novitiates will be thronged with fresh and confident youths, anxious to run in the way of the counsels in order to find Christ more easily and sacrifice themselves more completely for the redemption of their brothers.

GASTON VALTORNINO, O.P.

(This article was translated and abbreviated from the Italian by James M. Egan, O.P. It originally appeared in a special number of *Vita Cristiana*, which bore the general title: *Problemi attuali dello Stato Religioso*, Florence, 1950.)



### PRAISE, NOT SATIRE

Straight, with crooked lines He writes.

A pattern of new approaches,

Francis prevails without his birds,

And Dominic rides in coaches.

# Isn't Thomism Outmoded?

In view of recent admonitions issuing from Rome that the Church in her varied fields of influence must adapt herself to modern needs and conditions, it would seem paradoxical that the encyclical *Humani Generis* should reiterate the ordinations of previous Popes that Thomism, both as a philosophical and theological system, is to be steadfastly maintained and faithfully taught. For if Catholic doctrine must be restricted within the confines of a medieval system of thought, how can anyone possibly conceive of an application of that doctrine which will be efficacious and in harmony with present-day systems of thought? In facing this dilemma, certain modern theologians, while manifesting the greatest zeal for an adaptation of the Church's doctrine to modern times, have shown an equally strong disdain for the traditionally honored scholastic philosophy and theology.

Let it be understood at the outset that the proponents of this new trend in theology are by no means numerous nor do they represent a universal tendency in the Church. The beginnings can be traced to certain intellectual groups in France but unfortunately they have found eager disciples in England, Germany, and the United States. By this time it is known to all that these persons were the occasion of the new encyclical *Humani Generis*.

## The Argument Against Scholasticism

The apparently harmless proposition advanced by this group that Catholic doctrine must be brought to modern man, whether he be intellectual or no, and in order to effect this, the doctrine must be presented in modern man's language. More than that, it must be adapted to modern man's cultural and emotional background because religion is an immanent and vital thing which is constantly changing with man himself. Now if the language of Catholicism is not intelligible to the man of today, how can we reach him unless we speak his tongue? If we further take into account the many non-Catholic sects, both Protestant and schismatic, which will not admit the parlance of scholasticism in any discussion, what recourse is left but to return to Scripture itself and the Fathers of the Church? Many non-Catholics will hear the words of an Augustine, a Jerome, or a John Chrysostom, but will close their ears and hearts to an Aquinas or a Bonaventure.

There is, of course, a great deal of truth in this new tendency and many of the men who support it are among the best thinkers and most zealous workers in the Church today. No theologian worthy of the name would deny that sound doctrine alone is not

enough; the theologian must also be coefficient with his age, being keenly aware of the temper of the times and the condition of man. But through their vague and obscure terminology one can see that the modern reformers are striking at something much more profound than language and methods. The Holy Father points out that if they only aimed at adapting ecclesiastical teaching and methods to modern conditions and requirements, there would scarcely be any reason for alarm.

### Shades of Modernism

When one studies the doctrine of these persons on the value of Patristic writings, the role of philosophy in deducing theological conclusions, the teaching authority of the Church, and the nature of the supernatural order, it becomes evident immediately that the Church today is faced with a mitigated form of Modernism. The encyclical *Humani Generis* is easily accessible to all who wish to see the precise points of doctrine on which the modern reformers are in error, but it is interesting to recall the words of Pope Pius X, writing in his encyclical *Pascendi* in 1907, for they apply very neatly to the present condition:

It remains for us now to say a few words about the Modernist as reformer. From all that has preceded, it is abundantly clear how great and how eager is the passion of such men for innovation. In all Catholicism there is absolutely nothing on which it does not fasten. They wish philosophy to be reformed, especially in the ecclesiastical seminaries. They wish the scholastic philosophy to be relegated to the history of philosophy and to be classed among obsolete systems, and the young men to be taught modern philosophy which alone is true and suited to the times in which we live. They desire the reform of theology: rational theology is to have modern philosophy for its foundation, and positive theology is to be founded on the history of dogma. As for history, it must be written and taught only according to their methods and modern principles. Dogmas and their evolution, they affirm, are to be harmonized with science and history. In the Catechism no dogmas are to be inserted except those that have been reformed and are within the capacity of the people. Regarding worship, they say, the number of external devotions is to be reduced, and steps must be taken to prevent their further increase, though, indeed, some of the admirers of symbolism are disposed to be more indulgent on this

head. They cry out that ecclesiastical government requires to be reformed in all its branches, but especially in its disciplinary and dogmatic departments. They insist that both outwardly and inwardly it must be brought into harmony with the modern conscience, which now wholly tends to democracy; a share in ecclesiastical government should therefore be given to the lower ranks of the clergy, and even to the laity, and authority, which is too much concentrated, should be decentralized. . . . The ecclesiastical authority must alter its line of conduct in the social and political world; while keeping outside political organizations, it must adapt itself to them, in order to penetrate them with its spirit. With regard to morals, they adopt the principle of the Americanists, that the active virtues are more important than the passive, and are to be more encouraged in practice. They ask that the clergy should return to their primitive humility and poverty, and that in their ideas and action they should admit the principles of Modernism; and there are some who, gladly listening to the teaching of their Protestant masters, would desire the suppression of the celibacy of the clergy. What is there left in the Church which is not to be reformed by them and according to their principles?

### **Lack of Docility to the Church**

Not content with the promulgation of dangerous doctrines, our modern reformers add to their mischief by refusing to accept the corrections made by the Holy See. Even *Humani Generis* has been met with lack of docility in some quarters.

What are we to think of those who, in spite of the papal decrees, which have been especially numerous since the time of Pope Leo XIII, have consistently and stubbornly held to their own opinions? The pronouncements have been crystal clear; each one more specific. "Nor must it be thought," says the present Pontiff, "that what is expounded in Encyclical Letters does not of itself demand consent, since in writing such letters the Popes do not exercise the supreme power of their Teaching authority. For these matters are taught with the ordinary teaching authority, of which it is true to say: 'He who heareth you, heareth Me'; and generally what is expounded and inculcated in Encyclical Letters already for other reasons appertains to Catholic doctrine. But if the Supreme Pontiffs in their official documents purposely pass judgment on a matter up to that time under dispute,



it is obvious that that matter, according to the mind and will of the same Pontiff, cannot be any longer considered a question open to discussion among theologians" (Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis*).

Saint Thomas himself long ago admitted that the authority of any doctor or theologian must always give way to that of the Church. But when reprimanded or corrected, our modern reformers and non-conformists express a pained astonishment. "What is imputed to them as a fault they regard as a sacred duty. They understand the needs of consciences better than anyone else since they come into closer touch with them than does the ecclesiastical authority. Nay, they embody them, so to speak, in themselves. Hence, for them to speak and to write publicly is a bounden duty. Let authority rebuke them if it pleases—they have their own conscience on their side and an intimate experience which tells them with certainty that what they deserve is not blame but praise. Then they reflect that, after all, there is no progress without a battle and no battle without its victims; and victims they are willing to be, like the prophets and Christ Himself. They have no bitterness in their hearts against the authority which uses them roughly, for after all they readily admit that it is only doing its duty as authority. Their sole grief is that it remains deaf to their warnings, for in this way it impedes the progress of souls, but the hour will most surely come when further delay will be impossible, for if the laws of evolution may be checked for a while, they cannot be fully evaded. And thus they go their way, reprimands and condemnations notwithstanding, masking an incredible audacity under a mock semblance of humility. While they make a pretence of bowing their heads, their minds and hands are more boldly intent than ever on carrying out their purposes" (Pope Pius X, *Pascendi*).

### **Possible Adaptation of Language and Method**

The doctrinal points condemned in the encyclicals *Pascendi* and *Humani Generis* are no longer open to discussion but something remains to be said concerning the adaptation of the theological language and method. When God revealed sacred truth to man, He did so in a human way; that is, He spoke in the language of His hearers. But, as is evident from both Testaments, He did not reveal all things explicitly and it is the role of theology to make manifest what is hidden. In either case, whether we are to expound sacred doctrine directly from Scripture or through theology, we must use the human medium of language.

Now the great difficulty arises, for words are frequently a source of contention and obscurity rather than a means of clarification and definition. This is amply demonstrated by the difficulties encountered in the various sessions of the U.N. To one nation a word may have an entirely different emotional overtone and carry with it the association of a host of ideas far removed from the cultural background of another nation. The same difficulty does not arise in the discussion of mathematics or the physical sciences, for these make use of a technical language whose vocabulary is definitely set and accepted. Philosophy and theology, too, have their technical language but never in the history of the Church has there been absolute unanimity in the use and definition of all the technical expressions. The fundamental reason is, of course, because sacred doctrine so transcends our created and limited modes of thought and expression that it cannot be neatly fitted into the rational categories. Hence the great liberty of discussion which prevails.

But as early as the Council of Trent the Church has now and again availed herself of the technical language of scholastic theologians and philosophers when defining or expounding sacred doctrine. This declaration by the Church is an external expression of revealed truth and is an official act of the teaching Church in her ordinary magisterium and not merely a transitory description of Christian experience at some particular time in the life of the Church. But even when adopting the terminology of some school of philosophy or theology, the Church in no wise intends to canonize any particular system as such. "Even in these fundamental questions," says Pope Pius XII, "we may clothe our philosophy in a more convenient and richer dress, make it more vigorous with more effective terminology, divest it of certain scholastic aids found less useful, prudently enrich it with the fruits of progress of the human mind. But never may we overthrow it, nor contaminate it with false principles, or regard it as a great, but obsolete relic. . . . Whatever new truth the sincere human mind is able to find, certainly cannot be opposed to truth already acquired, since God, the highest Truth, has created and guides the human intellect, not that it may daily oppose new truths to rightly established ones, but rather that, having eliminated errors which may have crept in, it may build truth upon truth in the same order and structure that exist in reality, the source of truth" (*Humani Generis*).

"It is perfectly obvious," the Pope continues, "that the terms used to express these concepts both in the Schools and by the

Teaching Authority of the Church, can be improved and perfected; moreover the Church is known not to have always made constant use of the same terms. It is clear, too, that the Church cannot be bound to any ephemeral philosophic system; but those terms which by common consent have been composed through many centuries by Catholic teachers in attaining to some understanding of dogma, certainly are not based on such an insecure foundation. . . . Thus it is not surprising that some of these concepts have not only been employed by Ecumenical Councils, but also so sanctioned by them that it is wrong to discard their use' (*Ibid.*).

### Church's Sanction of Saint Thomas

In the same line of thought Pope Pius X had previously insisted, in full accord with the papal tradition, that Thomism is to be the very touchstone of the Church's declaration of sacred truth: "The capital theses in the philosophy of Saint Thomas are not to be placed in the category of opinions capable of being debated one way or another, but are to be considered as the foundations upon which the whole science of natural and divine things is based; if such are once removed or in any way impaired, it must necessarily follow that the students of the sacred sciences will ultimately fail to perceive as much as the meaning of the words in which the dogmas of divine revelation are proposed by the magistracy of the Church. We therefore desire that all teachers of philosophy and sacred theology should be warned that if they deviate so much as a step, in metaphysics especially, from Aquinas they expose themselves to grave risk. We now go further and solemnly declare that those who in their interpretations misrepresent or affect to despise the principles and major theses of his philosophy are not only not following Saint Thomas, but are even far astray from the saintly Doctor. If the doctrine of any writer or saint has ever been approved by us or our predecessors with such singular commendation and in such a way that to the commendation were added an invitation and order to propagate and defend it, it may easily be understood that it was commended to the extent that it agrees with the principles of Aquinas or was in no way opposed to them" (*Doctoris Angelici*, 1914).

All this is more than enough to substantiate the condemnation by Pope Pius IX of the proposition that "the methods and principles which have served the ancient doctors of scholasticism when treating of theology no longer correspond with the exigencies of our time and the progress of science" (*Syllabus*, prop. 13).

The answer to the problem of adaptation, therefore, must in the mind of the Church be found within the framework of Thomism.

## **Saint Thomas and the Fathers**

It goes without saying, then, that a return to the writings of the Fathers is not the answer. Indeed, if their teachings have to a large extent been purified and evaluated by later theologians, why should anyone want to reject an obvious advancement of theological thought? For the Fathers had many confused notions and even contradictory teachings on numerous points of sacred doctrine, and some points which are important to us today, they did not discuss at all. This does not mean that there is no place in the Church for studies of Patristic literature or that we should not emulate the zeal and apostolicity of the Fathers, but if there has been an evolution of dogma, as the modern reformers maintain, why surrender the flower of theology for its seed?

Saint Thomas knew the Fathers well and it was unavoidable that he should have found much help in their writings, above all in Saint Augustine, Saint John Damascene, and Pseudo-Dionysius. Nor did he overlook the Greek, the Jewish, and the Arabian philosophers. All get a hearing and a judgment. For Aquinas saw all too clearly that theology, as queen of the sciences, must absorb something from other disciplines and at the same time judge only according to standards of objective truth rather than the authority of the one writing. The authority on which theology rests is not the theology of any Doctor or Father but the authority of God revealing and the Church proposing for belief.

## **Theology is a Science**

Theology, therefore, is not revelation as such; it clarifies and develops revealed truth. The unity of theology and its immutability flow from the principles on which it rests and the very nature of the human mind in its search for truth. Theology begins with revealed truth and whatever is logically deduced from the content of revelation must likewise be true, not for just a generation or epoch but always. Man's goal in life is ever the same and the basic means to reach that goal can never change. Consequently what is the essence of Christian doctrine and practice in one age cannot be something different in the next. The clothing may be changed, it is true, but the theological body of doctrine remains essentially the same.

At this point we meet the controversy over the distinction between theology as a science and the theology of the preacher; in other words, the difference between speculative theology and



practical or applied theology. Though it remains substantially the same sacred truth, the theology which is studied as a science by the seminarian differs greatly from the theology which is applied to the art of Christian living from the pulpit or in the popularized written version. And it is this latter form, the applied theology, which must have the greatest flexibility and adaptability for it is this theology which seeks to make direct contact with the faithful.

## Philosophy and Revelation

Yet even in regard to speculative theology or theology as a science one should clearly understand the role of philosophical reasoning in the deduction of conclusions from revealed truth. The philosophical premises used in the theological arguments are so elevated by virtue of the revealed principle to which they are annexed that they are no longer purely human products but they become the handmaids of a divine science. To say otherwise would be to admit four terms in the argument and thus close off all possibility of a logical conclusion. If, as some moderns maintain, sacred truth is merely the instrument of man's knowledge, and this to the extent that the divine is absorbed by the human, then the supernatural element of revealed truth is annihilated, faith is destroyed, and sacred doctrine is debased to the level of purely human science. A destruction of the very thing which the moderns set out to save! But if theology is a divine science and true wisdom, then the revealed truth in any theological argument must necessarily be the active principle while the philosophical premise is nothing more than an instrument and handmaid.

The Thomist's position is that the divine truth sheds its light on the philosophical premise in such a way that the latter borrows the certitude of the revealed truth. It is nothing more than an extension of the statement of Aquinas himself that theology is the study of God and of all things else in their relation to God. It is this *God's-eye* view of things that runs through all Thomistic theology. But the moderns would look at the same reality from man's point of view and hence it is inevitable that they should manifest the tendency to fit God very neatly into their own rational categories and make of religion and theology a purely human phenomenon which changes with succeeding generations. Then the revealed word of God, instead of being the foundation and higher light for theology, becomes the instrument and tool of the human intellect and man himself becomes the sole criterion of religious truth.

## Theological Evolution

Here again it is evident that the modern reformers destroy the very possibility of theological evolution, though they claim to be its staunchest defenders. The essential pre-requisite to any kind of evolution is unity because things which are specifically different cannot evolve; they can only increase by addition. But if the transformation of theology is intrinsic, then the very unity of theology is destroyed and theology itself becomes a loosely connected series of religious conclusions resting on nothing more stable than a man's religious feeling and the transitory milieu of a particular generation. If, on the other hand, the theological transformation touches only the accidental modifications of that science, such as terminology, method, and application, then there can be no argument with the moderns.

Only with these distinctions in mind can one subscribe to the statement of one of the reformers that a theology that is not *actual* is a false theology. Theology, resting as it does on the revealed word of God, is perennial and manifests a marvelous unity in spite of its growth; indeed, it grows precisely because of its unity. It can never, therefore, be considered antiquated or outmoded; much less, an enclosed system of thought. It is the pulsating and vitalizing word of God dwelling among us. As the Vatican Council declared: "Let intelligence and science and wisdom, therefore, increase and progress abundantly and vigorously in individuals and in the mass, in the believer and in the whole Church, throughout the ages and the centuries—but only in its kind, that is, according to the same dogma, the same sense, the same acceptance" (*Dei Filius*, cap. iv).

## The Duty of Thomists

But while Thomists rejoice in the renewed papal approbation of the doctrine of Aquinas, they should at the same time realize keenly the charge that is laid upon them to make this doctrine coefficient with our times. Sacred doctrine should be studied for the sake of truth itself and the good of souls and not for any love of a system as such. Saint Thomas certainly would not want anyone to study his works just for themselves, as one would study history or literature. They were meant to be maps or guides along the road to God and although their immediate purpose was to train theologians, no theologian should ever forget the true end of his knowledge.

If Thomism is considered outmoded and even despicable by many moderns the fault lies not with Thomism but with certain Thomists. How many of them are mere sounding-boards, know-

ing only what is in Saint Thomas and ignoring everything else. Their maxim seems to be that if a thing isn't in the writings of Saint Thomas, it isn't true or at least it's not important. Others, like trapeze artists in a circus, are so enthralled with syllogisms and method that they seek to astound rather than teach. Still others lose themselves in the transcendent order of speculative principles and seem never for a moment to realize that modern man is hungering for the bread of truth and groping for a lamp to light his path. If it takes the threat of relativism and subjectivism to awaken such Thomists from their lethargy, then this over-zealous and erroneous tendency has been a blessing in disguise.

## **The Continuation of Saint Thomas**

Let us admit once and for all that Aquinas did not say the last word on everything and that there are numerous things which he did not even consider at all. Let us ask ourselves what the Angelic Doctor would do if he were sitting in the professor's chair of any large university today. We know from what he did in the thirteenth century what his mode of action would be in the twentieth. We know from his prologue to the *Summa Theologica* that he would seek to avoid the subtleties of certain other teachers and proceed according to the order of discipline. He would also study and know thoroughly the modern philosophies, from Descartes through Kant to Dewey and Sartre; he would be abreast of all the tendencies and developments in the various intellectual circles; above all, he would realize profoundly the needs and fears and perplexities of our modern man. He would accept the proved findings of the physical sciences, as he accepted the science of his own day; he would take from Freud or Russell whatever of truth is in their writings and would profit from their particular viewpoint concerning reality. Then, evaluating all, he would make precise judgments as truth requires. Should modern Thomists do less?

If Thomism is truth it is also perennial, and if it is perennial it must be vital, not static. Its very vitality makes it adaptable and subject to growth through evolution. The Church insists on this adaptation, but always within the framework of the traditionally safe lines of thought. What is needed, then, is not the rejection of Thomism, not even its popularization, but a prolongation and deeper penetration. In other words, Thomism must be applied to the needs and problems of today's children either by an adaptation and application of Thomistic doctrine already formulated and

perfected or by further deductions from Thomistic principles in the various fields of thought as yet uncharted.

If Thomists accept the challenge we can almost certainly expect great advances in the various branches of experimental psychology, esthetics, apologetics, Mariology and Christology, and spiritual theology. Each of these branches of learning presents its own special problems which beckon to the sincere and competent Thomist. The words of Pope Pius X (*Jucunda Sane*) should serve as both a challenge and an encouragement to any worthy Thomist:

The times are indeed greatly changed. But, as we have more than once repeated, nothing is changed in the life of the Church. From her divine Founder she has inherited the virtue of being able to supply at all times, however much they may differ, all that is required not only for the spiritual welfare of souls, which is the direct object of her mission, but also everything that aids progress in true civilization, for this flows as a natural consequence of that same mission.

Truths of the supernatural order, of which the Church is the depository, necessarily promote everything that is true, good and beautiful in the order of nature, and this is accomplished most efficaciously in the measure that these truths are traced to the supreme principle of truth, goodness and beauty, which is God.

Human science gains greatly from revelation, for the latter opens new horizons and more readily makes known other truths of the natural order. It opens the true road to investigation and preserves it from errors of application and of method. Thus does the lighthouse manifest many things which otherwise would not be seen, while it points out the rocks on which the vessel would suffer shipwreck.

Finally the arts, modelled on the supreme exemplar of all beauty, which is God Himself, from whom is derived all the beauty that is to be found in nature, are more securely withdrawn from vulgar concepts and more efficaciously uplifted towards the ideal, which is the life of all art.

JORDAN AUMANN, O.P.



# BOOK REVIEWS

## Nuns and Vocations

**RELIGIOUS SISTERS**  
The Newman Press, \$3.50  
**RECRUITING FOR CHRIST**  
By Godfrey Poage, C.P.  
Bruce, \$3.00

*Religious Sisters* is the English version of *Directoire des Supérieures* and *Les Adaptations de la Vie Religieuse*. Translated by sisters and containing a preface by the late Cardinal Suhard of Paris, it is a work which

American religious should welcome with joy. Being a lay person, I am at a disadvantage reviewing it since I have no practical experience of the life it holds up to view; nevertheless, the very fact that I am an "outsider" may have its advantage, since I am able to view the life as a whole, without the natural prejudices and pre-conceived notions of one who is part of it.

This work was undertaken by a group of French priests, regular and secular, who were concerned by the serious crisis facing religious life for women: "scarcity or complete lack of vocations; many subjects leave during the time of novitiate, or even after it; there is a certain mediocrity in the spiritual and apostolic life; many girls have a vocation but do not know where to enter, or else, rather than enter religion, prefer to remain in the secular state, either isolated or in community." These priests, it is good to note, did not decide to dispel this crisis by superficial means, by high-pressure advertising for vocations, nor by introducing into religious life trivial pleasures and relaxations to act as a "come-on" for modern youth. On the contrary, "we were all of one mind in thinking that it is not hasty working out of 'adaptations' that is called for since these might speedily reveal themselves as dangerous compromises with the spirit of the world. Rather is it required to show that there is only one way of restoring to religious life its complete fertility, and the attraction that it offers to the young and that is to live it in its fullness and thus present it to the young with all the exigencies of reality. It is a fact that numerous novices present themselves in institutes whose religious are living a truly consecrated life in loving dependence upon God, practising the evangelical counsels and disseminating their spirit."

The first part of the book therefore is devoted to a thorough evaluation of religious life in all its traditional grandeur, with a careful exposition of the theology of the vows. There is a chapter on the nature of Christian perfection and of the religious life which emphasizes that its aim is union with God through love, and that all the means of the religious life, valuable as they may be, are ordered solely to that end. The religious, as anyone else who aspires to perfection, must detach herself from everything likely to prevent her from wholly tending toward God. "The whole religious life is based on the idea of making this affective detachment easier by a single stroke of effective detachment." This is done by "the leaving of all things," by the threefold renunciation of the goods of the world, of all sexual life, of one's personal independence. How this is done, by the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience is then discussed in detail. These chapters on the vows are among the most inspiring in the book. The one on poverty, written by a Franciscan priest, is both beautiful and practical, urging superiors to draw out the

ner soul of poverty while clinging to the letter as well; "poverty must be both affective and effective, interior and exterior." The author recalls saying that "there is no true poverty where there is no hardship." He is careful to explain though in what that hardship should consist, and notes that the sisters need nourishing food for their health. The religious is urged to depend upon the providence of God, and there is a concluding reminder that the prosperity of orders has always coincided with the flourishing of the virtue of poverty.

The chapter on the vow of chastity is devoted mainly to a consideration of its essence, with a concluding section of suggestions for the practice of chastity. The author (a Benedictine) shows the full glory of chastity without (and this is something especially to delight a lay person) the depreciation of marriage sometimes found in works of this kind. On the contrary, he is careful to point out that "such renunciation of human marriage is possible only in view of marriage with God through Christ." So that chastity is not sterility, nor worse still repression, it must be chosen because of *love*. It is this positive element with the spiritual fecundity which it brings that the author stresses. He advocates that novices be given an adequate sex education so that they know what they are giving up; that they be taught that in renouncing marriage they make a threefold renunciation: physiological, emotional, and procreative; that they be urged to divert their longing for maternity toward spiritual ends. "Let novices know that without this spiritual end, their vow of chastity runs the risk of making them impaired beings, women less fully women than others in the world." While to preserve chastity there must be a guard over the affections and the senses, nevertheless, the author reminds religious, they are called to love God and their neighbors as *human beings*; there must be no repression of the affections in such a way that mental health and happiness are injured.

The chapter on obedience (by a Dominican) explains its supernatural character. The author (as later on in the book the author of a chapter on "Adaptations of Religious Obedience") is careful to stress the fact that the young, who have been educated to develop their own personalities and use their initiative, will only respond to the idea of obedience and the submission it entails if it is presented to them in all its supernatural splendor. There is an interesting discussion of whether or not a subject can sacrifice her judgment to her superior, with the reminder that no one has the right to risk sacrificing the truth: "in actual fact the essence of obedience does not at all imply thinking the same as one's superior." In the chapter on "Adaptations" there is a discussion of "blind obedience" with the conclusion that such obedience if demanded constantly, is absolutely contrary to the respect due to the Christian character of the subjects.

In the section on adaptation there is an illuminating chapter by Victor de la Vierge, O.C.D., in which he discusses at length the necessity of adapting religious life to the needs of the modern day. He brings out the point that for an order to lead its members to perfection and fulfill its apostolic function in the Church there must always be a certain amount of changing forms which are temporal and passing. "Some aspects are always changing but only in order to allow what is essential to remain the same." To work out adaptations correctly religious must have a real knowledge of the ideals of their order and also a profound understanding of the needs of our age. The author carefully points out that, from the

example of saints like Teresa of Avila and Therese of Lisieux, we can see that only a religious who has been faithful to all the observances of her rule can tell what things should be changed, what things are obstacles rather than aids to perfection, and which customs hinder the practice of the apostolate and even interfere with the demands of charity. "Superiors have the mission to see that the rule is kept, but also the duty of interpreting it according to the needs of the time." In a succeeding chapter Msgr. Ancel points out that only fervent religious congregations can adapt themselves. If they are not fervent all pretended adaptations will really be mitigations and fatal to the religious life. We can readily see the wisdom of this statement especially since some of the modernizations of convents (like the introduction of television sets) appear rather to foster a worldly life among the sisters than to facilitate their perfection or promote their apostolic ventures. It is very easy to fool ourselves, but these chapters on adaptation, written as they are with wisdom, genuine understanding of young people, and tremendous insight into modern problems should be extremely helpful in unmasking any self-deception among religious.

In sharp contrast to *Religious Sisters* is *Recruiting for Christ*. Perhaps it is not even fair to mention them together. The first, as I hope I've amply demonstrated, approaches the problem of diminishing vocations from a profound point of view; the second sees the problem superficially. It is especially disappointing because it concentrates on propaganda methods for recruiting vocations (some of which, like the using of a roulette wheel in a classroom to get the kids "vocation-minded," I found extremely distasteful—but perhaps that is only a personal reaction) and never goes into any self-examination of the religious communities as they now exist. The author gives what seemed to me a mediocre, diluted interpretation of the nature of religious life. When he takes a poll of why most sisters enter the convent he comes forth with the conclusion that "security as to one's eternal salvation" is the big drawing force. This rather confused me because the authors of *Religious Sisters* clearly indicate that the desire for perfection (union with God through love) should be the motivation of anyone entering the convent. Such a statement as "Poverty, chastity and obedience are joys only to those who have never practised them" is rather upsetting, because while one is ready to concede that they exact much sacrifice and suffering, still they must bring with them exquisite joy. If a nun does not find her chastity a source of joy she is a frustrated old maid and surely would be better off out of the convent. The "adaptations" the author suggests are exceedingly superficial—based, one fears more on the weaknesses of modern young people rather than upon the heroic qualities in them which yearn for development. Father Victor (in *Religious Sisters*) says: "They want a hard life and easily understand how exacting love can be"; and the full Carmels and the waiting list for the Trappistines in this country prove that he is right but although the author of *Recruiting for Christ* mentions that youth is attracted by the demand for total self-sacrifice he then drops this line of thought to return to the mediocre appeal. His book as a whole makes me sad because I think of all the young people I know who are yearning for something more, of the glory of religious life itself which will soon fade in this country if its candidates are treated to the same level of appeal as recruits for the Naval Reserve.

Perhaps the Carmelites don't have to bother recruiting because in contemporary times they have had saints like Therese and Elizabeth of the Trinity. Perhaps if religious gave the example of intense charity, their sanctity would attract young people to join them. Perhaps if our Catholic schools were concentrating on turning out integrated, whole-hearted Christians, ready to do the will of God at all costs, they wouldn't have to worry about special "vocation clubs." Perhaps if confessors were encouraging young people to aspire to sanctity in whatever state God wills them, there would be no need to fear that the religious life would be overlooked.

My own feeling in the matter is that of fervent hope that religious America will do some thinking along the line of *Religious Sisters* and make the adaptations to American needs of which they are quite capable.

DOROTHY DOHEN

## Catholic Know-How

### BEYOND HUMANISM

By John Julian Ryan  
Sheed & Ward, \$3.00

The contemporary flurry of criticism directed against our American scheme of higher learning has resulted in two general types of suggested reform, neither of which, it seems to me, touches the real trouble. One of these reforms calls for a re-arrangement of what is taught—a shift of emphasis, perhaps, with an addition here and a subtraction there. We add a course in contemporary civilization and leave out Latin, or we increase the amount of required philosophy. The other reform seeks as its goal the raising of the level of teaching and learning, so that the students will work harder and presumably know more. This latter reform movement has behind it the more serious and far-seeing part of the teaching profession, but nevertheless it is limited by the limited vision of that profession. The better college teachers are specialist scholars, authorities in their fields, and they are anxious to reproduce themselves. In their mind, therefore, the purpose of higher education is to train more specialist scholars, intellectuals, savants. In short, these reformers want our schools to turn out the same kind of person that the European universities have been graduating for centuries. But this is clearly not enough. The European intellectual, in spite of his knowledge, has not been a shining example of wisdom, and he has certainly not shown himself able to exercise any effective social leadership. He has rather tended to be what Napoleon contemptuously called an *idéologue*, cut off from the humanity that surrounded him, and resting content in an esoteric humanism. And the social movements of Europe have dealt with him rather roughly. As long as higher education has the production of scholars as its goal, it will contribute little to the revitalizing of society.

John Julian Ryan has presented us with another objective, and one which if adopted might enable our schools actually to produce the leaders that they claim to make. In place of the scholar he sets forth the artist as the type which our schools should aim to turn out. The scholar knows. The artist knows and *knows how*.

Mr. Ryan reminds us that our tradition of liberal learning was originally designed to train artists rather than scholars, people who wanted to know *in order that they might do* rather than simply to know. Hence the term *Liberal Arts* which has been attached to this learning. "The



liberal arts consist of the kinds of arts which the free citizens of a country were to prosecute in establishing and conducting a civilization which leads to the happiness of its members. Thus all free men needed to know how to debate and deliberate, how to reach a sound political decision, how to conduct themselves honorably, how to communicate eloquently, how to compose literary works like plays, how to discuss and philosophize, how to contemplate . . . the full man being made by both the making of the society which enabled him to exercise his highest powers and by the intense exercise of these powers" (p. 85).

The Christian, keeping the concept of the liberal arts, must extend their meaning more widely and deeply, for he must aim to produce a different kind of freeman, and a different kind of society. Thus liturgical worship is a Christian liberal art, and a Christian must make himself adept at it.

Mr. Ryan's analysis of what is involved in mastering a liberal art is itself a masterpiece. The state of expertness in such an art would be "a state in which, whenever we found ourselves in a situation properly to be dealt with from the point of view, and by the special methods, of this art, we should at once recognize this fact, and immediately adopt that point of view and make skillful use of those methods: in the light of them, defining the problem exactly; identifying, with precision, its various factors; imaginatively and yet sensibly sketching out appropriate designs or hypotheses; ignoring extraneous considerations and bringing to bear quickly the universal principles that were pertinent; by scientific experimentation (real or imaginative) discovering new principles as required; recalling experience of solving similar problems, as well as the theories and practices of past masters . . . and working to a fresh final solution systematically" (p. 88f). The students are to acquire this expertness by an apprenticeship to men who are masters of Christian Living.

The principle on which these Christian liberal arts are to be integrated is not another art, or another "subject," but *Christian practicality*. They are to be chosen, ordered one with regard to another, and evaluated according to their place in true Christian living: in the worshipping of God and the executing of the Catholic program.

This is the barest sketch of John Julian Ryan's proposal. The book is filled with re-assertions of the main ideas and with countless practical suggestions for carrying these ideas out. To me it comes like a bracing cold shower, leaving me with a morning-fresh inspiration as to what can be done in educating young people. This different approach would seem to surmount some of those old difficulties that make one so cynical toward education in general: the difficulty that when we succeed in our teaching we produce men who know and don't *do*, and who thus leave the doing to men who don't know; the difficulty that our attempts to integrate the students' knowledge result most often in giving them more things to be integrated; the difficulty that we train people solely as to their minds leaving their bodily skill to occupy itself on sports and hobbies which have no relation to what the mind is concerned with; and—most discouraging difficulty of all—the fact that we labor mountainously to bring forth an educational scheme which is truly Catholic, and then what is born from so much travail is just a secular scheme with a medal pinned on it.

WILLIS NUTTING

## Invisible Calvary

THE CLIFF'S EDGE  
Songs of a Psychotic  
By Eithne Tabor  
Sheed & Ward, \$2.00

These short fifty-odd poems were written by a young girl psychotic in one of our country's largest mental hospitals. They concern the inside and outside events that occur in the "shadow'd land" of the "Prison of lost

reams." The writer is born with the gift

"... to control bright words,  
Showered like silver stars,  
Singing as the birds  
Even behind these bars."

Words and rhythms seem waiting for an opportunity to pour out, and when she is even "outside of conscious awareness" they group themselves into a pattern amazing in its logic. In many of the poems, as would be expected from a person still "disturbed," she is too engaged in the spectacle of her own tortured experience to allow of her complete absorption in the experience subject—with the consequence that attention is centered more on the emotional situation of Eithne Tabor than on whatever object aroused these emotions. But where the experience consumes her self-attachment she achieves the realization of why her suffering is justified; when the tense rhythm and sheared concision of her poetic form communicates not only her emotional experiences but brings to light a message which is of great significance to an age afflicted more than ever before by the disease of insanity. The patient states unequivocally that she prefers "the racking crown of thorns" to her former world of "freedom . . . sanity," yes, even of talented accomplishments, where

"Each in his little shell of self  
Listened to his private sea . . ."

because—and this is the reason of an "insane" person—

"... God

(Yes, and in spite of Freud!)

Lives closer to the minds

Whose self-shields are destroyed."

Is insanity a catastrophe? Or may it also be a grace? For

"Out of the ashes of this seeming ruin

Let us rise Phoenix-like, reborn in pain!"

The suffering of the mentally ill is elevated to one of highest dignity for the sick one can say

"... the cry I write has echoed down

From Christ Himself, dictating from the Cross!"

"I was like you—my *spirit crucified*."

Essentially, what makes this book of poems significant is that they are written on the way to an "invisible Calvary" and the best of them have the power to convey the suffering and the fulfillment won there.

The catchy sub-title—Songs of a Psychotic—smells more of the art of the advertiser than of the poems contained within the pages. It is sentimental, which the poems are not. And considering the unmitigated awareness with which this mental patient is brought face to face with her cross as compared with the beating-around-the-bush approach of most of the sane ones, one is faced with the perplexing question whether her way to the cross is less "sane" than ours.

NELL SONNEMANN

## BOOK NOTES

*Everybody Calls Me Father*, by Father X (Sheed & Ward, \$2.25) is the latest first-person story of a parish priest. The publishers expect it to be a best-seller, and they are probably right. It's written in Damon-Runyon fashion, is very funny at times and moving too . . . .

*Idea Men of Today*, by Vincent Edward Smith (Bruce, \$5.), is a very good book for boning up on all the bad ideas that are flowing around and making the modern world the ideological chaos it is. Santayana, Bertrand Russell, Karl Marx, Whitehead, Freud, Bergson, Kierkegaard, Sartre, and others are there. The treatment is a little academic, but interesting. It's suitable for non-philosophers approaching these ideas for the first time but it's not superficial. Dr. Smith's particular gift is clarity. Strongly recommended . . . Newman has published Trochu's biography of *Jeannette Jugan*, foundress of the Little Sisters of the Poor (\$3.75). Msgr. Trochu is the same man who did a careful, accurate study of the Cure of Ars, and this is a similar work. His heroine had a hard life if ever a foundress did: she was thrust into obscurity by a priest who put another nun in leadership, for which he was finally, but much later, humiliated by the Holy See . . . Sheed & Ward has republished C. C. Martindale's *The Faith of the Roman Church* (\$2.50), a tight little book of doctrine. They've also published six Lenten conferences which Msgr. Ronald Knox gave last year in Westminster Cathedral, under the title of *Saint Paul's Gospel* (\$1.75). Msgr. Knox's idea was to learn Christianity from Saint Paul although the Gospels had never been written. We are discussing Saint Paul's Epistles over lunch at INTEGRITY, and you haven't tried to read them with understanding you don't know how hard it is. This book was very helpful. The ease with which Msgr. Knox moves in Saint Paul's mind, so to speak, fills us with admiration.

## OUR WRITERS

We don't know anything about the Italian Dominican whose article Fr. Egan has translated for us. What we do know is that the substance of the article parallels the material in *Religious Sisters* to which we have given such a long review. In case you have wondered why we didn't give the book to a nun to review, the answer is: 1. We did, but she was pressed for time and didn't feel she had the over-all background to do it, and 2. We don't know the really top nuns whose business it is to worry about these things. Wish we did. Father Jordan Aumann, O.P. is an American Dominican teaching at the Angelicum in Rome. Dr. Willis Nutting, a layman who teaches at the University of Notre Dame, has not a few ideas of his own on education; also on the land movement. He is the author of *Reclamation of Independence*. Mary Reed Newland is an artist as well as a writer, a wife and a mother. Nell Sonnemann, also an artist, is a recent convert to the Church.

A group of volunteers, including some of our staff, sell INTEGRITY on the streets one night a week in New York, and would welcome additional help then or at other times. We should also like to have people do this in other cities, either as volunteers or on a 25% commission basis. Street selling is the best long-term way of introducing new ideas and publications. We can remember the years that Mrs. Sanger, or one of her followers, sold her birth control paper to homeward-bound office workers on 42nd Street at Fifth Avenue -- and look what came of *that*.

We are also looking for special agents in colleges to solicit subscriptions or sell individual copies, at 25%, but not the same people who are agents for all the secular magazines (our scruples).



# ABOUT THE THOMAS MORE

As readers of INTEGRITY you have been reading about The Thomas More Association. Many of you have become members of the Thomas More Book Club and know about our fine selection of books and all the other advantages of membership. But those of you who are not members—who are still anti-book club, even though we think our book club is different—may be interested in learning about our other activities.

The Thomas More Book Shop is the largest Catholic book shop in the midwest and one of the largest in the country. Our Book Service serves individuals and libraries throughout the United States, and in Canada, Mexico, South America and the Philippines. In our stock is almost every type of book—fiction, biography, apologetics, belles lettres, spiritual reading, philosophy, poetry, education, books on the liturgy, current interests and an unusually wide selection of juvenile books. We will be glad to take care of all of your book-needs.

The other big activity of The Thomas More Association is publication of the magazine, BOOKS ON TRIAL. Eight times a year BOOKS ON TRIAL brings its readers reviews of current books (over 700 in the eight issues), articles, features and columns about timely and controversial literary subjects. The magazine appraises books from the standpoint of morality, reading value and suitability for various classes of readers. Among the outstanding Catholics in the field of literature who have written articles for BOOKS ON TRIAL are Joseph Breig, Catherine de Hueck Doherty, John Julian Ryan, Donald Attwater, Lucile Hasley, Father Leo Trese, Maisie Ward, Leo Brady, Anton Pegis and many others.

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**FOR GOODNESS' SAKE** was written by **William Lawson, S.J.**, as a result of asking his class a rhetorical question and getting an answer. The question was "Have you noticed how ATTRACTIVE goodness is?" The answer was "No." \$2.25

**ROMAN ROAD** by **George Lamb** is an account of the author's own particular, quite improbable, path to Rome. He started from a Manchester slum, went through High School and Cambridge on scholarships, and has finally landed, a good deal surprised, on the doorstep of the Church. \$2.25

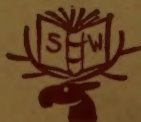
Our generation is troubled by a sense of guilt, sometimes plainly felt as such, sometimes in the thin disguise of abnormalities plainly related to it. In her new book, **GUILT**, **Caryll Houselander** examines the reasons for this and compares the sense of guilt in the saint, the neurotic and the criminal, giving examples—and portraits—of each category. \$3.75

**THE HIGH GREEN HILL** is a collection of essays by **Father Gerald Vann** on a variety of subjects—the Mass, the Apostolate of Satan, the Theology of the Magnificat, Confession and Health of Soul are a few of the titles. \$2.25

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